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LET'S VISIT A NATIONAL FOREST
Ozark--Arkansas

A radio discussion between John Baker, Radio Service, and Elizabeth Pitt and Marvin Beers, Forest Service, broadcast Friday, June 16, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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BAKER:

It's time for that vacation trip we promised you last Friday . . .
(MOTOR HORN)

JUN 28 1939

And there's the car right on time.

PITT: (OFF)

Hurry up, John, and don't forget your dark glasses like you did last time . . .

BAKER:

I've got them, Betsy . . . I'll be with you in a second. Farm and Home Friends, we are about to start on another imaginary vacation trip to one of our National Forests . . . one of those trips that Betsy Pitt of the Forest Service suggested for us folks who can't go traveling about the country just any old time we'd like to. Today, we are going down to the beautiful northwest section of Arkansas and visit the Ozark National Forest. (FADING) All right, Betsy, I'm ready now . . . let's go.
(MOTOR UP AND UNDER)

PITT:

Well, here's the Ozark National Forest, and we've got something special planned to do.

BAKER:

And I can guess what it is . . . you're going to make me walk up a thousand steps to see what's going on in that fire tower over there.

PITT:

(LAUGHING) There are not a thousand steps . . . and anyway the exercise will be good for you. This is the White Rock Lookout on the top of White Rock Mountain . . . it's one of the most beautiful places in the Ozarks. Oh, there's the lookout waving to us . . . way up there . . . on the tower steps.

BEERS:

(OFF) Hello, folks . . . glad to see you. Come on up. I can't leave the tower.

BAKER:

Thanks. We'll start anyway . . .

PITT:

You go first, John. I want to take my time.

BAKER:

I believe this tower is over a hundred feet high . . . I never saw so many steps.

(over)

PITT:

Well, we've got quite a few of them behind us now.

BAKER:

These white rock cliffs below here are quite a sight. They look like a great rock fortress on the mountain top.

PITT:

The mountain is named White Rock on account of those cliffs. On a clear day you can see them for miles.

BAKER:

I certainly like these gentle, rolling mountains. Thank goodness, we're almost to the top of this thing . . . Good morning, Mr. Lookout.

BEERS:

Hello, Mr. Baker. You made pretty good time coming up those steps. Good morning, Mrs. Pitt.

PITT:

How are you, Mr. Lookout. It's nice to be in the Ozark Forest again . . I mean it will be as soon as I get my breath again.

BEERS:

(LAUGHING) Well, let's see folks . . suppose we have a look at the scenery . . and then we'll look over the fire tower equipment.

PITT:

That's a good idea. U-m-m, look at those mountains! From here you'd think there was nothing else in the world but Ozark Mountains.

BAKER:

It certainly does . . say, all the slopes seem to be covered with trees . . the timber must be coming back all right.

BEERS:

Yes, it's coming along fine. . not only are the trees and the wildlife coming back, but we've sold lots of timber. You know we only cut as much each year as the trees can grow in one year, and I heard Mr. Koen, our Supervisor, tell someone the other day that the Ozark National Forest had earned well over a million dollars from timber sales.

PITT:

That's wonderful. Think of all that means . . a nice sum went into the United States Treasury, and the local counties here in Arkansas also got something. And of course it created a lot of jobs . . they had to hire men to get the timber out.

BAKER:

I suppose the money Arkansas got out of it went to the schools?

BEERS:

Some of it. The counties got 25 percent of the entire earnings for Arkansas schools and roads, and the Forest Service earmarked another 10 percent for National Forest road improvements in the Ozark Forest. A lot of money was paid out to workmen by the men who had the logging contracts, and that means a great deal in any rural community where cash earnings are scarce.

PITT:

I should say it does. Now, let's take a look at the fire tower equipment, Mr. Lookout.

BEERS:

All right . . here you are . . ask me anything you like.

BAKER:

Maps all over the place! My, they show a lot of detail, don't they?

BEERS:

They have to. In fire control work, everything depends on locating the tell-tale smoke correctly. I do that by triangulation on these maps. Then I phone the information to the ranger in charge of the district, and it better be right.

PITT:

Here's some of the lookout's tools. . his Osborne fire finder, his binoculars, and the telephone . . and of course the maps.

BAKER:

Fire is a big forest problem down here, isn't it?

BEERS:

Yes . . it's pretty bad all through the South. Much of it seems to be due to the old custom of burning the woods for all sorts of reasons . . trying to improve the grazing . . getting rid of ticks . . almost anything you can think of.

PITT:

With the losses far outweighing the benefits. I remember seeing a statement somewhere that about fifty million dollars worth of forest assets are burned up in the South every year.

BAKER:

Much of the finest and most valuable white oak timber in the United States comes from the Ozark Mountains, doesn't it?

BEERS:

Yes, and a great deal of it is right here in the Ozark National Forest.

PITT:

The public attitude about fires in the woods has changed remarkably since people have seen how the timber comes back in areas that are protected from fire, hasn't it.

BEERS:

Yes, that's made a big difference. It took Supervisor Koen about 20 years to do it, but he's made the public understand that the National Forest is here to help the people who live in this country.

BAKER:

How many fires do you average a year?

BEERS:

We still have quite a few . . . but we spot em pretty quick and get them under control before they burn over much land. Last year we had 80 fires, but they burned less than 400 acres.

BAKER:

All those 80 fires were man-caused, I suppose.

BEERS:

Oh, yes. There are no lightning fires down here like there are in the West. I don't know why, but it looks as though human beings just can't learn to be careful with fire in the woods.

BAKER:

And the only thing left to do is to develop the most efficient fire protection system possible. Well, your's seems to be working pretty well if you burned less than 400 acres in this big National Forest last year.

BEERS:

That's all . . . and there are nearly 800,000 acres in this Forest. We have 28 fire towers with cabins . . .

PITT:

The cabins are for the lookouts so they can stay right on the job during the fire season. John, I hate to leave this nice cool mountain top with a birdseye view of western Arkansas, but . . .

BAKER:

I know, Betsy . . . I've been dreading that myself but we must be back in Washington on time. Sign the Visitors Register over there, and let's be on our way.
(MOTOR UP: MOTOR HORN)

BAKER:

And here we are, Farm and Home Friends, back in the studio in Washington after an imaginary visit to the lookout in the White Rock Fire Tower in the Ozark National Forest in Arkansas, a fine place to grow timber and also a great place for camping and fishing. We hope you'll go with us next Friday when we visit the Santa Fe National Forest in the colorful State of New Mexico.

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